

This is written on a snowy April day, but I hope it finds you reading it on a warm, sunny day in May, and that you are registered to vote in the primary on June 5. All 105 legislative seats are up for election, and as you know, the more local the election, the more it matters in your life – these legislative seats are important.

I've been pretty hard on our legislature since term limits kicked in (and kicked too many good people out). There was a good example of what I've been talking about this year. First of all, in my opinion, about 80% of the legislators are what we've started calling "the Normals." And while we've always some wacky folks, what has us alarmed the last few years is that the Wackies are getting to over 20% of the legislature. The good news this year is that the Normals did a better job of sticking together and not letting the Wackies run the place. The bad news is it's an election year and the whole thing is up in the air again.

But why does this matter?

I'll have to give you some definitions. "Normal" doesn't mean we always agree – but The Normals are usually willing to look at issues one by one, listen to facts, and make rational decisions. Whackies, on the other hand, have come in opposed to government in general and all forms of taxation; seem to firmly believe the state and local governments are ripping them off; and often have their own particular nit to pick on some other topic. They think facts they don't like are lies and they blanket vote based on a preconceived mindset, not on the issue at hand.

Look at Senate Bill 25. Many years ago, the State took over regulation of water pollution control – meaning everyone here gets to work with the state DENR instead of the Federal EPA. When they did that, they put in place fees to pay the costs of administration. For municipalities, those were based on the 1990 census.

More than 20 years later, federal funding has decreased, and there has never been an increase in these fees. DENR came up with a bill to help them keep doing this – the alternative is having to work with EPA – if the state cannot do it, EPA will take it back over.

There were no opponents to the bill, and everyone who would pay an increase supported it – farm groups, business groups, the Municipal League.

It died in the House – the Wackies don't like taxes or fees. Now eventually it was brought back to life and it passed – but 22% voted against it in the end - that mindset stops things from happening, even if people affected want it – and it stops people from bringing things forward.

We desperately need to get that "wacky ratio" down – the Legislature is important and getting good quality people to serve is important. Please make good decisions on June 5 and again in November!

Until next month, we are always available at 1-800-658-3633 or yvonne@sdmunicipalleague.org

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